

Juggling work and care: the story of **Angeline**



Angeline.

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Angeline is 41 years old and lives with four of her children and her husband, Joseph, on the outskirts of Geren Village at La Chappelle. Her son is Simon (five), and her three daughters are Stephanie (seven), Gina (three), and Johanne (one). Joseph is 50 years old and splits his time living between his first wife and Angeline. Angeline also has five older children from her first husband, Samuel. Their ages range from 13 to 23, and none of these children currently live with her.

She met her first husband in Geren, but he was not from the area. Even after they had children together, Samuel never built her a house, and Angeline lived at her father's place. Samuel also came to live with her at her father's home, and he used to bring food and some money to her, but he never stayed permanently, because he also

had another woman. Once, Samuel left Angeline and the children for one year. She decided to end the relationship and refused him when he came back. It has been seven years since she separated from him, and during this time Samuel has not cared for the children.

Two years after the separation, Angeline started a new relationship with Joseph. He built a house for her and her children, and he took care of them even though the children were not his. Her children lived well with their new stepfather for five years, but three of the children that she had had with Samuel decided to move out and join their biological father in another village. The eldest daughter also left and now lives in another town with her partner, and Angeline's second daughter attends school in Mirebalais and lives with a church pastor's family.



Cajanus Cajan (Congo beans).

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Participation in the CLM programme

Angeline started seeing immediate changes in their living conditions after joining the programme in 2017. The Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM) programme has improved her family's living conditions drastically. When the house that Joseph built for her and her children collapsed after many years without renovations, she had to live in a temporary shed that provided coverage from the sun, but would not protect them from the rain. The CLM programme helped Angeline build a proper house where her children could sleep safely without worrying about the weather. Cash transfers helped her through the tough times when she could not work after giving birth, and when Joseph could not support her financially due to illness.

Before the programme, Angeline used to sell homemade foods and ropes and washed laundry for other people in another village where she used to live and work. Since joining the programme, she does not do these activities any more. Angeline chose livestock and commercial trading as part of the CLM economic activities.

Livestock rearing supports the household's needs, in particular the needs of the children. Since joining the CLM programme, Angeline has managed to grow her herd to four goats, three chickens, and a pig. She also participates in local savings groups. Along with her home garden and a plot some distance away, she also rents a plot to grow staples such as beans, maize, and Congo beans that are an essential part of the household diet.

Besides livestock rearing and commercial trading, Angeline cultivates a variety of local greens and crops in her home garden. The healthy diet promoted by the CLM programme has inspired many of the vegetables and crops that she grows. Angeline also farms a small plot near her house and another plot further up the hill. She cannot manage all the farming work by herself, so she asks other people to come and work in an exchange arrangement called *kombit* (in-kind payment with food and money), in which a group of six people work together on each other's farms in turn. Her husband used to help with farming, but since he fell ill, he seldom helps.

Last but not least, participating in various group meetings and training has allowed her to become more respected in her community. Angeline is proud of her home, her steadily growing savings, and how her children look better since joining the CLM programme.

Positive or negative effects on her children

Angeline admits that she used to be negligent in caring for her children. The CLM programme has taught her the importance of a healthy diet, clean water, and hygiene for children. Her children fall sick less often, thanks to drinking treated water and using the latrine. She also cooks a more diverse range of foods, using leafy greens, tubers, grains, and beans, and fish whenever she can afford it. There is no doubt in her mind that the CLM programme has contributed

positively to providing a stable environment in which her children can live in healthier and cleaner conditions. Angeline praised the programme, saying, '[b]ecause of the CLM, the children drink treated water, the children are not sick, and they don't walk around dirty'.

However, on the other hand, Angeline is unable to protect her children from harm and to interact with them in a more responsive and supportive way because of her work. Angeline is anxious and worried about leaving the children alone.

When their father is not there, and I go to the marketplace, I don't know what they are doing. I don't have any control over them... Once I went to collect a bit of water and I left them playing in the yard. One cut the other's finger, and I had to put aside what I was going to do in order to get her bandaged up in La Chappelle.

One of the main challenges for Angeline is to secure supervision and care for her children while she is away working. Since Angeline's primary occupation is trading, she spends a lot of time at the market. When she goes to the market, she has to leave the house early in the morning before dawn and only returns late in the afternoon. She asks her relatives and neighbours to look after her children or sometimes her husband may stay with them, but often her children are by themselves.

Nevertheless, the support of relatives and neighbours regarding childcare is essential for Angeline's work. While their services and help are invaluable, this support

is reciprocal as she also looks after their children when she is available and needed. Angeline prepares and leaves food in advance for the relatives and neighbours when her children stay with them. Even if she does not bring food, however, the relatives and neighbours would still feed her children, but it would not be a full portion. She is concerned about leaving the children alone, but she has no other option. When they are by themselves, Stephanie and Simon prepare food for themselves and Gina and Johanne.

Challenges

Angeline is the *de facto* head of the household and her four children. Joseph suffers from complications of fever, chest pain, and indigestion, which frequently makes him bedridden. Joseph has been suffering from these symptoms for six years. Using herbal remedies, he would get well after a week of treatment, but a week later, he would fall sick again. His frail condition makes it impossible for him to work. Moreover, his commitment to his first wife's family divides his time and financial support to Angeline.

The biggest challenge for now and for the future is her health. Angeline endures heavy loads of merchandise on her head over long distances when she goes to the market. This affects her sleep, and although she feels tired the next day, she carries on with her work without resting sufficiently. One way to alleviate her troubles is to buy and use a draught animal, but she cannot afford one yet.



Simon making fire.

PHOTOGRAPHER: © SUNGKYU KIM



Transporting merchandise.

PHOTOGRAPHER: © SUNGKYU KIM

Hopes and aspirations for the future

Angeline knows how difficult her work can be on her body, but she feels that her hardship is nothing compared to the opportunity and optimism that the programme has brought to her life. 'The [CLM] programme has been good for me, I didn't have any future, but CLM has allowed me to live with hope.' Angeline wants her children to learn bigger and better things in life. She aspires for her children to pursue their studies to become nurses or doctors, or to go overseas.

In the meantime, she wishes to spend more time at home to look after and give more attention to Stephanie, Simon, Gina, and Johanne. For example, she wants to cook more for them and to teach them good family principles and values in life. To do so, she could start making and selling food or other goods from home, but the distance from her house to the nearest road and neighbours is too far to make such a business viable. Angeline is aware that the isolated location of her home is a problem and wants to find better opportunities elsewhere, but for now, she has no other option but to stay.



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